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Pax Christi Int'l at UN Decol. Comittee

Pax Christi International

Intervention on the question of East Timor before the Special Committee of 24; 13 July 1994

Pax Christi International would like to thank the Chairman and the Special Committee of 24 for this opportunity to present an intervention on the question of East Timor. Pax Christi International, the international Catholic peace movement, appreciates your efforts in working with the interested parties to implement the committee mandates.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 1514 (XV) of 14 December, 1960 (on decolonization), and UN Security Council Resolutions 384 and 389 provide a basis for working for specific human rights, including the right to self-determination.

The United Nations Human Rights Commission continues to provide recommendations to investigate and prevent abuses against the Timorese people, including recommending use of the UN Special Rapporteur on Torture.

Pax Christi International supports all these UN efforts, including the use of the Secretary General's good offices for achieving a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable settlement of the question of East Timor.

Human rights organizations and all involved parties have a role to play in this process. Amnesty International's Feb. 16, 1994 report, Fact and Fiction: Implementing the Recommendations of the UN Commission on Human Rights, provides valuable documentation. It includes a Jan. 14,1994 letter from Bishop Carlos Felipe Ximenes Belo of Dili, to a friend. He wrote: "With this letter I would like to let you know that torture continues in East Timor. On Jan. 4, 1994 in Dili, the military were waiting for a young man named Salvador Sarmento, who is a student at the Pastoral Institute. When he left the classroom they took him, stuck him in a military vehicle and took him to a place where he was kicked, beaten, tortured until he was almost dead. Then they forced his parents, who are illiterate, to declare that they had seen their son participate in subversive meetings. With these kind of injustices, they want to force a declaration that Father Sancho Amaral is a priest who is against Indonesia."

A Pax Christi International intervention to the 50th Meeting of the UN Commission on Human Rights, Feb. 18,1994, reported that witnesses interviewed by Mr. Max Stahl testified that survivors of the Nov. 12, 1991 Dili massacre were killed after being taken to Wira Husada military hospital. The massacre has yet to be fully investigated.

Pax Christi calls for the release of all Timorese political prisoners, including Xanana Gusmao.

While a long term solution in East Timor is debated, initiatives can provide a foundation for mechanisms to deal with self determination issues. Initiatives could include the honoring of commitments agreed to by the UN Human Rights Commission, access by UN Special Rapporteurs, Working Groups and Specialized Agencies, freer access to East Timor by International and Human Rights Groups, dialogue with Governments, nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations, reductions in military personnel, and implementation of all international human rights instruments. UN sponsored dialogue should continue, but any serious proposal must include the Timorese people in the negotiations.

Let us work together in open and courageous dialogue to establish mechanisms to respect the religious and cultural traditions of the East Timorese people, and to protect their social, economic, and political rights, including the right to self-determination.